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### Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Management Plan



Moore Canyon, Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness

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## **Part I – Introduction**

### Background

The 75,550-acre Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness (BRCW) was designated as a component of the National Wilderness Preservation System on October 24, 2000, when the President signed into law the Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area and Black Ridge Canyons Wilderness Act of 2000. The BRCW makes up the core area (61 percent) of the 122,300-acre Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area (CCNCA).

### Purpose of the Wilderness Management Plan

This Final Wilderness Management Plan (WMP) establishes the objectives, policies and actions for managing the BRCW for the future. The plan identifies ongoing Wilderness management actions and prioritizes actions for implementation. It fulfills the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) policy requirement that a management plan be prepared for Wilderness. This plan incorporates many of the decisions from the 1998 Ruby Canyon/Black Ridge Integrated Resource Management Plan.

### Location/Access

BRCW is located 2 miles southwest of Fruita in Mesa County, Colorado. Approximately 5,200 acres of the Wilderness extend into Grand County, Utah. The BRCW is situated on the northwest flank of the Uncompahgre Plateau. Access to the BRCW is provided via the King's View (Horsethief Canyon) Road, the Black Ridge Access Roads, BS Road and the Colorado River. (Figure A3-1). The Lower Black Ridge Access Road is open from August 15 to February 15, while the Upper Access Road is open from Easter weekend until August 15.

### Wilderness Boundary

The Wilderness boundary follows private lands and the Colorado River (100-year flood plain) on the north; a narrow utility corridor on the east that parallels Colorado National Monument; the Black Ridge and BS Roads (boundary is 30 feet from centerline) and private property on the south; and the Mountain Island Ranch Road (boundary is 30 feet from center line), Utah state lands and private property on the west. (Figure A3-1).

### Ownership/Land Use

The Bureau of Land Management administers all land within the Wilderness. There is no State or private surface or subsurface inholdings or utility rights-of-way within the BRCW.

## Wilderness Values

The BRCW, with seven primary canyons totaling over 60 miles, has long been recognized as one of Colorado's premier wildlands, with sandstone arches, alcoves, monoliths, hoodoos and spires scattered throughout. The Wilderness, natural in character with negligible human imprints, is characterized by a high east-west ridgeline draining north to the Colorado River through the canyon network. Imprints on the upland mesas include fence lines, stock reservoirs, and trails that minimally impact the naturalness of the area due to unobtrusive locations and natural screening.

The BRCW provides outstanding opportunities for solitude due to the area's size, configuration, topographic variety and vegetative screening and are greatly accentuated by the area's ability to disperse visitors horizontally and vertically through the landscape.

The Wilderness provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation based on outstanding scenery, landscape variety, geologic features, and cultural and paleontological resources. The area's topographic diversity, unusual geologic features and intermittent water-courses appeal to hikers, while unique phenomena, such the arches in Rattlesnake Canyon and the vast alcove in Mee Canyon enhance their hiking experiences. Other popular activities in BRCW include horseback riding, hunting, nature study, photography, wildlife viewing and backpacking.

The BRCW possesses a number of outstanding geological, paleontological, archaeological and ecological values and is also considered to have very high values for education and scientific research.

## Climate/Air/Water

The BRCW has a high desert climate. It is primarily semi-arid and precipitation is variable. Annual precipitation in Grand Junction, 7 miles to the east of the Wilderness, averages slightly less than 9 inches of rainfall per year. Average annual snowfall is 22 inches. Temperatures in Grand Junction range from a mean maximum of 65 degrees F to a mean minimum of 38 degree F. Summers in the BRCW are hot with many days in the 90's. Most Wilderness use occurs in the spring and fall when temperatures are moderate.

Mesa County is in attainment with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Intermittent flowing streams generally characterize the canyons within the BRCW. The upper parts of Mee and Knowles Canyons have seasonal flows. All canyons have some short-term flows associated with snowmelt and summer rainstorms. Water quality for these canyons is excellent.

## Noise

Noise is defined by Colorado law as sound that is unwanted and which causes, or tends to cause, adverse psychological or physiological effects on human beings. Ambient noise levels are not available within the BRCW. In general, they are assumed low except for vehicular traffic noise on roadways bordering the Wilderness, locomotive engine noise and whistles from trains traveling through Ruby Canyon, noises associated with motorboat use on the Colorado River and noises associated with approved administrative uses of the Wilderness.

## Soils

South of the Colorado River, the majority of soils are developing in sandstone parent material and eolian deposits under predominantly pinyon and juniper vegetation. Soils are generally shallow over hard sandstone bedrock with rock outcrops. In the Black Ridge area, shales of the Morrison and Dakota Formations have had a greater influence in soil development and they contain more clay. Nearly all soils in the BRCW have high water erosion potential and trails need to be carefully located to prevent accelerating soil loss. Biological soil crusts (a.k.a. cryptobiotic soils) are common on soil surfaces and once disturbed take long periods to re-establish.

## Vegetation

Vegetation along the canyon floors consists of a combination of grassy parks and sparse stands of pinyon-juniper woodland. Isolated stands of cottonwood trees and other riparian species, such as willow and box elder, can also be found along the drainages.

Vegetation on the mesas consists of moderate-to-dense stands of pinyon-juniper woodland. The low-to-moderately dense stands support a diverse understory of shrubs, forbs and grasses. They provide important desert bighorn sheep habitat. Sagebrush parks are scattered throughout the uplands and provide vital deer winter range. Some parks are dominated by crested wheatgrass, introduced by BLM in the 1950s and 1960s.

Non-native plants are found in the BRCW. For definition, the noxious weed program focuses on plants characterized as “noxious” by the BLM, State Department of Agriculture, and or Mesa County. These listed plants are generally invasive in nature. In general, the upland portion of the Wilderness has few infestations of noxious weeds. Canada thistle and tall whitetop are found in Flume Canyon. Major canyon drainages host an abundance of scattered tamarisk.

The largest Colorado population of the rare plant, Canyonlands Lomatium, clings to the soil around the bases of the Rattlesnake Canyon arches.

Rangeland Health Standards for public lands in Colorado (approved in 1997) were applied to the BRCW in 2001 and 2002. Five public land standards were used to determine if the standards are being met. The five Land Health Standards include: (1) upland soils, (2) riparian systems, (3) healthy, productive plant and animal communities, (4) special status, threatened and endangered species, and (5) water quality. A site was determined to be “meeting the standards for land health” if all standards were being met.

Results of a land health assessment completed for the BRCW in 2001 (App 1) show that approximately 99 percent of the Wilderness meets Land Health Standards (see map - App 1, p. 80).

### Wildlife

The fauna found within the BRCW is characteristic of the Colorado Plateau. To date, 10 species of mammals and 37 of birds have been inventoried in the area. Big game species in the BRCW include desert bighorn sheep, mule deer and elk. Other species of note include the golden and bald eagles, peregrine falcons (5 to 6 nesting pairs), and the collared lizard. A rare butterfly, Minor's Indra Swallowtail, is also a resident of the Wilderness.

### Recreation

The BRCW provides outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation (see Wilderness Values). According to the “Colorado Canyons National Conservation Area 2001-2002 Visitor Study Final Report” (Northern Arizona University, Dec 2002), hiking, horseback riding and nature study are the most satisfying activities in the Wilderness.

The current recreation management of the Wilderness is based on managing recreation for beneficial outcomes (as discussed in Chapter 2). Managers can provide visitors the opportunity to obtain their desired experiences and resulting benefits by managing the physical, social and administrative settings of an area. These settings are based on the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), which classifies recreation settings on a scale from primitive to urban. These ROS classes help to reflect the ability of visitors to achieve specific experiences.

In 1992-1993, the BLM, Northern Arizona University (NAU) and the USDA Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station participated in a Benefits Based Management pilot project for CCNCA. The Ruby Canyon-Black Ridge User Study assessed how the visitors used the CCNCA, keying in on activities, experiences and benefits. The CCNCA was re-surveyed by NAU in

2001-2002. These surveys provide important baseline and trend data as to what is happening with recreation in the Wilderness.

### **Black Ridge Canyons East/ Rattlesnake-Mee Canyon Access/ Urban Wilderness Interface**

<b>Scale of importance:</b> -2(least) to 2(most)	<b>Desired Experiences</b>	<b>Ability to Realize</b> 1(low) to 4(high)
1.8	Savoring Wilderness aesthetics	3.5
1.8	Savoring area canyon country aesthetics	3.6
1.7	Escaping everyday responsibilities for a while	3.7
1.6	Releasing or reducing some built-up mental tensions	3.6
1.5	Enjoy frequent exercise	3.5
1.5	Feeling good about being isolated and independent	3.4
1.5	Enjoying easy access to diverse primitive and unconfined outdoor recreation environments	3.4
1.5	Enjoying exploration	3.2

<b>Scale of importance:</b> -2(least) to 2(most)	<b>Desired Benefits</b>	<b>Ability to Realize</b> 1(low) to 4(high)
1.8	Increase quality of life	3.4
1.7	Improved physical fitness/better health maintenance	3.5
1.6	Greater freedom from urban living	3.3
1.6	Enhanced sense of freedom in being able to get to this special place	3.4
1.6	Greater sense of overall wellness	3.5
1.6	Renewed human spirit	3.4

### **Black Ridge Canyons West**

<b>Scale of importance:</b> -2(least) to 2(most)	<b>Desired Experiences</b>	<b>Ability to Realize</b> 1(low) to 4(high)
1.8	Savoring Wilderness aesthetics	3.6
1.7	Savoring area canyon country aesthetics	3.7
1.7	Escaping everyday responsibilities for a while	3.8
1.7	Feeling good about being isolated and independent	3.2
1.6	Enjoying easy access to diverse primitive and unconfined outdoor recreation environments	3.9
1.5	Enjoying exploration	3.6

<b>Scale of importance:</b> -2(least) to 2(most)	<b>Desired Benefits</b>	<b>Ability to Realize</b> 1(low) to 4(high)
1.7	Increase quality of life	3.4
1.6	Improved physical fitness/better health maintenance	3.5
1.6	Greater aesthetic appreciation	3.4

## Fire

Fire is an agent of vegetative change for the Wilderness ecosystem. BLM records indicate that since 1980, 146 fires have burned 5,500 acres in the BRCW. The average fire size has been 38 acres, although many fires have been less than one acre. Fire management in the Wilderness is guided by the current "Grand Junction Field Office Fire Management Plan." Fire management objectives in the Wilderness are: (1) use natural and prescribed fire to achieve desired plant communities, (2) permit lightning caused fires to play their natural ecological role, and (3) reduce to an acceptable level, the risks and consequences of wildland fire escaping from the Wilderness. The overriding goal is to preserve the ecological integrity of the Wilderness and adjoining lands by allowing lightning-caused fires to burn, under prescribed conditions, that do not appear to jeopardize life and resources. All fire activities (suppression and fire use) will be guided by minimum impact suppression tactics (MIST) and will use the Minimum Tool Analysis to minimize adverse impacts on the Wilderness values.

## Cultural Resources

Man has occupied Western Colorado sporadically for about 13,000 years. The earliest cultural tradition was the Paleo-Indian, characterized by the hunting of now extinct megafauna and the production of distinctively fluted spear points. This was followed by the Archaic culture based on hunting and gathering. The Formative Period in western Colorado was a period of expansion/colonization by farmers from the southern Colorado Plateau. These Period sites are assignable to the Fremont cultural tradition that produced grayware ceramics, basketry and impressive rock art. The Fremont abandoned the region by 650 B.P (Before Present). The Utes, who were hunters and gathers, occupied the region until 1881.

Ranchers moved into the area after removal of the Utes. Much of the Wilderness provided excellent grazing for cattle and sheep. Historic cabins and many of the trails date from this period.

## Paleontological Resources

Known fossiliferous formations within the BRCW include the Morrison Formation, Burro Canyon Sandstone, and the Dakota Sandstone. The Morrison Formation has consistently yielded dinosaur and other fossils. Fossil locations in the Morrison have yielded many scientifically important fossils, including over 12 varieties of small to large dinosaurs, well preserved varieties of early mammals, eggs, crocodilians, turtles, fish, numerous invertebrates, as well as a variety of fossil wood, pollen and other plant remains. The Burro Canyon Formation in the



Wilderness has produced a 115-120 million year old sycamore, which may be among the world's oldest known plants.

### Livestock Grazing

BRCW is divided into 11 grazing allotments with 3 livestock operators. Approximately 4,900 Animal Unit Months (AUMs) of forage is available for livestock use. Grazing use permits have been issued for managing grazing duration, timing and livestock numbers to attain desired land health standards. Authorized Use Agreements have also been signed between BLM and livestock operators to provide specific guidance on restrictive use of motorized vehicles within the Wilderness. Motorized use is allowed only as the minimal tool for grazing allotments that were in operation prior to Wilderness designation. Fences, stock ponds, water catchments, and two-track routes to support livestock operations are located in the upland portion of the Wilderness. Grazing use is restricted to cattle only. Sheep use has been discontinued because of the possible transfer of disease from domestic sheep to the desert bighorns that inhabit BRCW. Grazing has also been discontinued in the major canyon bottoms, including Mee, Knowles, Rattlesnake and portions of Jones Canyons to protect riparian values.

### Administration

Administrative use of the BRCW is guided by the “minimum tool” concept derived from section 4. (c) of the Wilderness Act. This Act generally prohibits motorized equipment or mechanized transport in designated Wilderness, although it does allow them “as necessary to meet the minimum requirements for administration of the area.” This concept applies to grazing administration, on-the-ground Wilderness management, emergency services and fire and other resource management. These uses will always be in accordance with minimum tool principles. This means that motorized or mechanized means may be used to accomplish necessary objectives if Minimum Tool Analysis finds no other practical method through non-motorized or non-mechanized means. Authorized use agreements for motorized vehicle use in the Wilderness have been prepared with all of the grazing permittees based on minimal tool guidelines. Emergency services in the Wilderness are covered by agreements with the Mesa County Sheriff’s Department. Emergency situations are reviewed and approved by the CCNCA Manager. The CCNCA Manager reviews proposals for motorized access into the Wilderness on a case-by-case basis. This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is updated annually, provides a clear set of guidelines that emergency personnel can use to determine the appropriate type and level of response.

## **Part II- National Wilderness Management Goals**

Four standard management goals have been established by the BLM for its designated Wilderness areas. The goals are as follows:

1. To provide for the long-term protection and preservation of the area's Wilderness character under a principle of non-degradation. The area's natural condition, outstanding opportunities for solitude, outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and any ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value present will be managed so that they will remain unimpaired.
2. To manage the Wilderness area for the use and enjoyment of visitors in a manner that will leave the area unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as Wilderness. The Wilderness resource will be dominant in all management decisions where a choice must be made between preservation of Wilderness and visitor use.
3. To manage the area using the minimum tool, equipment or structure necessary to successfully, safely, and economically accomplish the objective. The chosen tool, equipment, or structure should be the one that least degrades Wilderness values temporarily or permanently.
4. To manage non-conforming but accepted use permitted by the Wilderness Act and subsequent laws in a manner that will prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of the area's Wilderness character. Nonconforming uses are the exception rather than the rule; therefore, emphasis is placed on maintaining Wilderness character.

## **Part III- Wilderness Management Strategy**

### Limits of Acceptable Change

Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) provides a process to determine appropriate resource and social conditions in recreation settings. LAC would provide the basis for monitoring in the BRCW. The primary emphasis of the LAC system is on the conditions desired, rather than on how much use an area can tolerate. The management challenge is not how to prevent human-induced change to the physical, biological or administrative settings within the BRCW, but rather deciding how much change will be allowed to occur, and what management actions would be implemented once limits have been reached or exceeded. Once in place, LAC can alert BLM managers to levels of unacceptable change and necessary actions. In doing this, LAC provides long-term protection and preservation of BRCW character. It is flexible enough to allow for site-specific situations, is cost effective, and is an excellent tool for public participation.

Four recreation management zones were identified in the Wilderness portion of the CCNCA out of the ten total recreation management zones identified in the CCNCA. Zone 9, the Urban Wilderness Interface and Zone 10, the Rattlesnake-Mee Canyon Access, are areas that provide relatively easy access into the Wilderness. The other zones in BRCW are Zone 8, Black Ridge East, and Zone 9, Black Ridge Canyons West. The Black Ridge Access Roads provide 4-wheel drive access to within one-half mile of the arches in Rattlesnake Canyon (a major attraction in this Zone). See Figure A-1. The “Black Ridge Canyons West” zone is more remote, difficult to access and provides both day and overnight use.

The LAC process is based on “indicators” and “standards” for each zone. Indicators measure important biophysical or social conditions. Standards define how much is acceptable for a given setting. For example, a social indicator could be the number of encounters per day. The standard could be less than three. Other example of indicators are: camp encounters, attraction site encounters, disturbance of biological soil crust, number of camps, feet/percent with braided trails, and percent of sites with litter/human waste. Good indicators must detect a change in conditions caused by human activities, be measurable by field personnel with simple equipment and allow different observers to consistently collect the same information.

The LAC process also requires developing a set of management actions to be taken when desired standards are not being met. These could be education actions, regulatory actions, development actions (modifying a trail system), or even use limitations actions.

Indicators, standards and management actions for mitigation purposes when standards are approached, will be developed and included in the Wilderness Monitoring Plan.

## **Part IV- Issues**

### Issue Identification

Issues concerning the planning and management of BRCW were gathered during public scoping meetings from written comments and through the participation of the Wilderness Zone Working Group as part of the development of the CCNCA Resource Management Plan (RMP). These issues were integral in the identification of management alternatives analyzed in the draft RMP.

The Wilderness Zone Work Group was one of four planning work groups composed of interested individuals from the local community. The group was instrumental in the development of Wilderness Zone planning through the alternative development stage. The Wilderness Working Group participated in

13 meetings (through January 2003) and 2 field trips (see Chapter 5 for more information).

## Issues

1. Long-term protection of Wilderness characteristics (including naturalness, outstanding opportunities for solitude and primitive recreation and supplemental features).
  - What monitoring indicators and standards should be used to determine when changes to Wilderness settings are unacceptable?
  - How will Wilderness characteristics be maintained?
  - What actions should be taken when LAC standards are not being met?
  - How will BLM gather information from Wilderness users and incorporate into planning and management?
  - How will recreation outside the Wilderness boundaries be managed to protect Wilderness values.
2. Management of recreation use
  - What visitor facilities are appropriate for the Wilderness?
  - How will commercial recreation be managed in the Wilderness?
  - If a need arises, how can non-commercial recreation be more restrictively managed?
  - What are the most effective methods to monitor Wilderness use?
3. Management of vegetation
  - How should livestock grazing be managed in the Wilderness?
  - How should weeds be managed in the Wilderness?
  - How should fire be managed in the Wilderness? What is the role of fire in BRCW's ecosystem?
  - How does BLM's Rangeland health standards apply to Wilderness?
4. Management of non-conforming uses (administrative, fire management, special situations).
  - How will non-conforming uses in Wilderness be mitigated?
  - What criteria will best determine when an emergency situation warrants the possible impacting of Wilderness values?
  - What restrictions should apply to fire suppression activities?
  - When should the Colorado Division of Wildlife be allowed motorized access to manage wildlife?

## Part V- Wilderness Management

### Desired Future Conditions

When asked what the optimum future setting would be for the Wilderness, collaboration with working groups produced the following desired conditions:

- Maintain the Wilderness values.
- Keep the resources in as pristine a condition as possible.
- As a general rule, do not allow motorized or mechanized access.
- Visitors should experience a minimal number of contacts with other visitors.
- Grazing should be maintained at no higher than the current level.
- Minimal facilities should be provided for visitors:
  - New trails only as needed to prevent resource degradation;
  - Minimal signage;
  - Facilities for parking, information, camping, etc. should be limited and provided outside the Wilderness boundary.

### Introduction to Objectives

In this section, objectives are established to address BRCW issues. Following each management objective is a prioritized list (highest priority first) of proposed actions, identified in the CCNCA RMP, that will help meet Wilderness management goals and desired future conditions. Monitoring may be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the proposals and BLM's ability to maintain desired Wilderness resource conditions and the Wilderness visitors' ability to realize desired experiences and benefits.

### **Objective 1. Maintain and enhance Wilderness values (naturalness, outstanding solitude, primitive and unconfined recreation, and supplemental features)**

#### Proposed Management Actions to Achieve Objective 1 – Common to All Zones

1. Develop the BRCW Monitoring Plan that would address:
  - the overall monitoring process and time frames.
  - formation of a LAC team to assist in Wilderness monitoring. This team could include the Wilderness Working Group, members of the public and BLM resource specialists.

- reviewing of existing data and identify data gaps for new inventory.
  - identification of indicators to be monitored.
  - monitoring and sampling techniques and documentation to be used.
  - training field people, volunteers and students who will assist in the monitoring.
  - creating a database system to facilitate data analysis for Wilderness planning and management.
  - developing standards which will be the limits of acceptable change for the BRCW.
  - identifying appropriate actions to maintain standards.
2. All proposed actions are subject to a minimum tool analysis and approval by the CCNCA Manager. The MOU would be maintained and/or developed to provide for grazing, search and rescue, and fire operations. Motorized/mechanized use would not be allowed within the BRCW except for administrative use, which is guided by the “minimum tool” concept derived from section 4.(c) of the Wilderness Act.
  3. Develop a comprehensive Interpretive Plan for the CCNCA and the BRCW that fully addresses interpretation, education and public outreach opportunities.
  4. Require use of designated sites, personal portable toilets and firepans for camping along Upper and Lower Black Ridge Access Roads and BS Road.
  5. Close the BRCW to all recreational hobby-collecting (rockhounding) to ensure that paleontological materials will generally be left in place.
  6. Designate trails for hiking and equestrian use, although some of the trails are not traversable by horse.
  7. Continue treatment of Russian Knapweed and Canada Thistle.
  8. Prohibit the discharge of any projectile by any means but not limited to firearms, bows, crossbows and paintball guns except for law enforcement or hunting in conformance with laws and regulations.
  9. Continue livestock grazing restrictions in Mee, Knowles, and Rattlesnake Canyons and expand to portions of Jones Canyon to protect riparian values.
  10. Work closely with the Colorado National Monument, the City of Fruita and the urban interface community on common issues:

Fruita

Snooks Bottom parcel

**COLORADO CANYONS NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA**  
Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Trails connectivity  
Gateway Community  
Colorado National Monument  
Trail connectivity  
Management consistency/coordination  
Urban Interface  
Community needs  
Resource protection

11. Collaborate with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to develop appropriate flight restrictions over the BRCW and request that this advisory be included on National Aeronautical Charts.
12. Do not grant special recreation permits for air tours over the CCNCA/BRCW.
13. Limit group size within the Wilderness in the first 2 miles of Knowles and Mee Canyons south of the Colorado River to 25; limit group size elsewhere in the Wilderness to 12.
14. Require dogs to be on a leash in high-use areas but under voice control in other areas.

Proposed Management Actions to Achieve Objective 1 - Black Ridge Canyons East/ Rattlesnake-Mee Canyons Access/Urban Wilderness

1. Designated travel on the Rattlesnake Arches Trail, Pollock Bench trails system, Flume Canyon and Devils Canyon trails system.
2. Evaluate the Devils Canyons trail system to determine if some trails should be closed and rehabilitated.
3. Designate the Rattlesnake Arches access road and trailhead for day-use only. Continue day-use designation within and near the outside of the Rattlesnake Arches Loop Trail.
4. Maintain the Lower Black Ridge Road and the Rattlesnake Arches Access Road at the current standard.
5. Designate parking locations along the Rattlesnake Arches road. The need for additional parking areas and turnarounds will be monitored.

Proposed Management Actions to Achieve Objective 1 - Black Ridge Canyons West

1. Implement a self-registration system where groups or individuals in this zone will be required to have a completed self-issue registration in their possession

for each visit. This system will help to better manage the Wilderness by providing information about user demographics, itineraries, group characteristics and other information. This system should be phased in from voluntary to mandatory.

2. New trails may be designated based on results of monitoring.

## **Objective 2. Provide for Primitive Recreation Opportunities**

### Proposed Management Actions to Achieve Objective 2 - Black Ridge Canyons East/ Rattlesnake-Mee Canyons Access / Urban Wilderness Interface

1. Maintain opportunities for visitors to realize their most important experiences and benefits:
  - increased quality of life
  - improved fitness/better health maintenance
  - greater freedom from urban living
  - enhanced sense of freedom in being able to get to this special place

### Proposed Management Actions to Achieve Objective 2 - Black Ridge Canyons West

1. Maintain opportunities for visitors to realize their most important experiences and benefits:
  - increased quality of life
  - improved physical fitness/better health maintenance
  - greater aesthetic appreciation

## **Objective 3. Maintain a Wilderness Ecosystem and Healthy Natural Processes**

### Proposed Management Actions to Meet Objective 3 – Common to All Zones

1. Monitor for land health and maintain existing areas meeting BLM rangeland health standards.
2. Implement restoration and reclamation projects in BRCW if not meeting land health standards.
3. Place emphasis on improving plant diversity, particularly in those areas dominated by cheatgrass or crested wheatgrass.
4. Control noxious weed in the Wilderness through inventory, treatment and education. Continue treatments of Russian knapweed and Canada thistle until gone. Manage around spring sites and drainages to control tamarisk. Release bio-agents, if approved, for large-scale reduction in extensive stands.



5. Manage wildlife habitat in the Wilderness to maintain existing species.
6. Manage for Animal Damage Control in accordance with BLM Wilderness Management Policy and the BLM Animal Damage Management Plan. The State Director will approve predator control programs on a case-by-case basis.
7. Manage surface water to meet or exceed water quality standards, i.e. meet land health standards. Springs would not be developed but would continue to be used by hikers and wildlife and to sustain associated riparian areas.
8. Continue to monitor Rangeland Health in the BRCW.
9. Attain/maintain Desired Plant Community objectives.
10. Continue grazing use in accordance with grazing permits, Allotment Management Plans, BLM Wilderness Policy and Wilderness Act.
11. Maintain range improvements in accordance with Cooperative Agreements and the Wilderness Act.
12. Expand current restrictions on livestock grazing to Jones Canyon for protection of riparian values.

#### **Objective 4. Provide Minimal Facilities to Meet Visitor Needs**

##### Proposed Management Actions Meet Objective 4 - Common to All Zones

1. Maintain roads administered by BLM to their current condition, and permit no improvement through ROW authorizations.
2. Close non-designated roads/ways not used for administration.
3. Contain all parking facilities to prevent encroachment into the surrounding area.
4. Construct restrooms at designated Wilderness trailheads as need arises.
5. Remove fences that no longer have a purpose.

##### Proposed Management Actions to Achieve Objective 4 - Black Ridge Canyons East/ Rattlesnake-Mee Canyons Access / Urban Wilderness Interface

1. If future demand or resource impacts dictate, develop a campground outside the southern boundary of the Wilderness.

2. Evaluate the Devils-Flume Canyon Trail System to determine if there is a need to reduce and rehabilitate unnecessary trails.

#### Proposed Management Actions to Achieve Objective 4 - Black Ridge Canyons West

1. Limit additional dispersed camping along BS Road between Knowles Trailhead and Jones Canyon Trailhead to designated locations only.
2. If necessary to accommodate additional use, move and expand the Knowles Canyon Trailhead and develop horse parking area along BS Road.

### **Part VI- Plan Implementation**

Upon completion of the BRCW Management Plan, a business plan will be prepared to identify costs estimates and priority inputs into the annual work plan (AWP) process. It will provide the detailed guidance for implementing Wilderness management actions. When practical, alternate funding sources will be investigated.

### **Part VII- Plan Evaluation**

Actions will be evaluated as they are completed. Every five years, a formal evaluation of the BRCW Management Plan should be conducted to ensure the proposed actions are being implemented and management is still consistent with the Plan's direction. The effectiveness of the LAC process should also be evaluated at this time.

Figure A2-1

